

Brexit

Aufgaben

- 1 Sum up the text. (Material)
(30 BE)

- 2 Explain the economic and political consequences of a withdrawal from the European Union such as the Brexit for the UK.
(40 BE)

- 3 Imagine you are invited to speak as a German youth representative at an international student meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, on the following topic: “The benefits and drawbacks of direct democracy as seen for example in the Brexit referendum”. Write a draft of this speech.
(30 BE)

Material**Adam Tayler: The looming questions the Brexit deal didn't answer (2021)**

More than four years after Britain voted to leave the European Union, Brexit finally came into full force at the start of 2021. An 11th-hour¹ trade pact, ratified by Parliament on Wednesday in a final victory for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's "get Brexit done" mandate, set a new framework for relations with the bloc².

[...]

- 5 The agreement stakes out Britain's post-Brexit relationship with the E.U. in painstaking detail across more than 1,200 pages. But despite years of negotiation, it leaves several questions unresolved. [...]

Here are some of [the] big questions that the Brexit deal has not answered:

What happens to the fish?

- 10 Fishing rights in the waters surrounding Britain had been a subject of bitter debate over the past few weeks. In the end, the two sides staked out an uneasy, and potentially unstable, compromise in the E.U.-U.K. Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Fisheries will be in a period of transition for five years, with E.U. ships eventually giving up a quarter of their fishing rights in British waters – far below what British groups had hoped for.

[...]

What about the financiers?

- 15 London is a global financial capital, with financial services employing over a million people and contributing \$178 billion to the British economy. So what does the trade agreement say about that?

Not much, it turns out. The agreement is almost entirely focused on tangible³ goods crossing borders, rather than services such as finance. And that could prove to be a sizable problem for British firms that hope to sell their services in European states.

[...]

- 20 **What is the future of Northern Ireland?**

The threat of a hard Irish border had lingered over Brexit negotiations, with concerns that the violence of the Troubles⁴ could return if border checks between Northern Ireland and Ireland, which remains an E.U. member, are established.

- 25 The Brexit deal has avoided that outcome. It will keep to a protocol agreed on last year that saw Northern Ireland stay in the E.U.'s single market for goods and apply E.U. customs rules at its ports, avoiding the chaotic scenes at the border that many in Ireland had feared.

In the long term, however, the changes will lead to concerns about diminished links between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Under the new rules, for example, the European Court of Justice will remain the top court for some disputes in Northern Ireland – but not the rest of the U.K.

- 30 The Irish government has reached out to those in Northern Ireland, offering to fund their places in Erasmus, a popular scheme that allows students to spend a year studying in another E.U. nation.

¹ 11th-hour – the latest possible time before it is too late

² bloc – European Union

³ tangible – materiell, dinglich

⁴ Troubles – ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland that lasted about 30 years (1960s to 1998)

And Gibraltar?

35 The future of this tiny British territory that sits underneath and is attached to the Spanish mainland was not detailed in the trade agreement. Roughly 15,000 Spanish citizens crossed the border into Gibraltar every day before the pandemic, and imposing a hard border would deeply disrupt economic activity in the enclave.

In a last-minute agreement reached on New Year's Eve before the transition period ended, Britain agreed to allow free movement to and from Gibraltar from Spain that would see the territory join the passport-free Schengen area, with passport checks at the airport for flights from Britain.

40 The agreement prevents the immediate need for a hard border but will raise longer-term questions about British sovereignty over Gibraltar, which is home to about 32,000 people and has been under British control since the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht.

Can the United Kingdom stay together?

45 Northern Ireland isn't the only issue tugging⁵ at the fabric of the U.K. As British lawmakers voted on the Brexit deal on Wednesday, the divisions were obvious: The vast majority of Scottish members of Parliament voted against the bill.

"Scotland's story is European. And that story does not end today," Ian Blackford, Scottish National Party representative for the Isle of Skye, said on the floor of Westminster.

50 The pro-independence movement in Scotland predates Britain's exit from the E.U. – the country voted to remain part of the U.K. by 55 percent to 45 percent in 2015 – and it was not in the remit⁶ of Brexit negotiations to deal with the issue, which is internal to Britain.

But there's little doubt that the drawn-out process has added fuel to the movement: A poll last month showed support for Scottish independence hitting a record high of 58 percent, though the British government has shown no sign of allowing a referendum on the matter anytime soon.

55 Will Britain's negotiations with the E.U. ever end?

These aren't the only outstanding issues to be navigated. Others include data protection and the matter of ensuring a "level playing field"⁷ between Britain and the E.U., which could allow Brussels to impose punitive tariffs on British industries if London slashed regulations to make itself more competitive.

60 The Brexit deal has clauses for reviewing trade terms after five years – a timing that would bring the negotiations roughly in line with the next British election – so the terms of Britain's relationship with the E.U. are likely to remain a political issue for some time.

David Allen Green, a commentator on Brexit, has argued that in the end Britain will find itself being progressively aligned closer with E.U. rules – as he puts it, potentially swapping an "ever-closer union" for "what may be an ever-closer agreement."

65 In theory, Britain could rejoin the E.U. (most polls put those who wish to rejoin several points ahead of those who want to leave), but the political cost of doing so would be high. The country would need to reapply – and begin another set of negotiations.

Adam Tayler: The looming questions the Brexit deal didn't answer, in: The Washington Post, 01.01.2021, URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/01/01/brexit-deal-unanswered-questions/> (abgerufen am 21.02.2021).

⁵ to tug – zerren an

⁶ remit – an area of responsibility or authority

⁷ level playing field – fair play